

*February 28th, 2012*

Agriculture Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Sam Farr

"Thank you, Chairman Kingston.

"I want to thank Under Secretary Kevin Concannon, Administrator Audrey Rowe, Dr. Rajen Anand, and Mr. Michael Young.

"Thank you for being here. This committee really appreciates your work, and that of your staff, to support families in need of a helping hand, as well as your efforts to promote healthy eating.

"We are all well aware of the devastating toll the 'Great Recession' has taken on millions of families across the country.

"Even though the economy continues to show signs of a recovery to many people continue to on hang by a thread.

"Families are barely making ends meet, and in many cases the reason they still are putting food on the table—or do not have to choose between paying bills or food---is because food programs such as SNAP and WIC are there to help.

"Today, more than ever, these programs are saving families, children and the elderly from hunger.

"These programs are a safety net. These programs are there to help. And we need these programs more than ever. .

"But unfortunately, SNAP, WIC and other nutrition programs have become a go-to-target on the campaign trail.

"They have to easily been used to deliver partisan punch lines, and score cheap political points.

"While the criticism has been quick to place a price on these vital nutrition programs—although not always accurately—they have been slow to realize its true value.

"SNAP and WIC benefits circulate through our economy. They are spent at local retail stores and corner markets, creating jobs and spurring economic activity.

"Nutrition and lunch programs provide fresh fruits and vegetables from our local farmers. Again, spurring our economy and supporting local jobs.

"These are trying times, and just as families cannot afford cut backs to nutrition programs, neither can our economy.

"It is clear that the goal is to get people into jobs and off of the benefits many American wish they did not have to depend on.

"But the current economic climate holds us to our responsibility to assist those that desperately need help.

"I hope that today we can have an honest and fair conversation about these food programs.

"I believe that we can agree that effectiveness and efficiency of these programs should be scrutinized.

"But not at the expense of hungry children and the elderly who depend on these programs.

"And definitely not to score political points or deliver partisan punch lines.

"Thank you again for being here, and I look forward to your testimony."     ###